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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003730

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: BUSH-HU MEETING AT APEC, RICE
NOMINATION

11. Bush-Hu Meeting at APEC

A) "The United States Casts a Curse on the Futures of
Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times"
editorialized (11/22):

". It seems inevitable for Washington to describe [its
'consistent'] position regarding the cross-Strait
situation as a 'curse' because, after all, either side
of the Taiwan Strait is constantly testing the bottom
line of the other side intentionally or
unintentionally. On the surface, it seems that
Beijing's logic is that 'China will use force if Taiwan
declares independence'; whereas Taipei's logic is
'Taiwan will declare independence if China uses force.'
But in reality, China has never slowed down its steps
in expanding its military buildup, and Taiwan has never
slowed down its pace in probing for the institution of
a new constitution or referendum under the slogan of
'no independence.' The gaps between words and
behaviors have provided an excuse for the hawkish
faction within both sides to escalate their
confrontations. A consequence of this spurring each
other on has also forced the United States to state
[its position] more and more explicitly.

"As a matter of fact, the curse that the United States
has cast on both sides of the Taiwan Strait with regard
to the "consistency" of its one-China framework has
produced a certain chemical reaction in the subtle
triangular relationship between Washington, Beijing and
Taipei. The chemical reaction is that both sides of
the Strait seem rather uninterested in improving their
mutual relationship but are trying every means they can
to work on their relationship with the United States.
The formal talks on cross-Strait issues by President
Chen have begun to focus more and more on 'stabilizing
Washington,' while statements made during election
campaigns seem to be "irritating Beijing" whether
intentional or not. The consequence [of Chen's
approach] resembles the summit between President George
W. Bush and Chinese President Hu Jintao in the way that
Bush used Chen's formal speeches aimed at alleviating
cross-Strait tensions to persuade Beijing, and Hu, in
return, uses Chen's campaign rhetoric to lodge
complaints with Washington. Such a model has recurred
several times this year. If judged from the
consequence, chances are high that the results are
unfavorable for Taipei. Was Taipei not the victim
[following][Chinese Premier] Wen Jiabao's visit to the
United States at the end of last year and Secretary of
State Colin Powell's visit to China last month? No
wonder whenever there are high level contacts between
U.S. and Chinese officials, the only focus of Taipei's
administration falls on whether there will be any
'unexpected remarks' by the United States.

"It is expected that after the year-end legislative
elections, no matter what the final results are, the
newly elected legislators will simultaneously explode
the issues of 'instituting a new constitution' and
'referendum' by 'amending the referendum law and by
'starting the process of amending the constitution.'
The expected situation will be that the Pan-Green
Alliance will be the initiators of the two issues while
the Pan-Blue Alliance would probably not hold it back
any longer. Will such a development break the curse
set by the United States? We are all eyes."

B) "Bush, Hu Each Express Their Own Views under the one
China Curse"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang said in the
conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News"
(11/22):

"The White House official's move to interpret
[Washington's] cross-Strait policy using the statement

that 'consistency is the key' was a repetition of Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly's comments at the House International Relations Committee hearing April 20, in which he indicated that the 'status quo' across the Taiwan Strait should be defined by the United States. The White House official's remark also demonstrated that the Bush administration's determination is to handle the cross-Strait situation from its own perspective.

"In other words, during its second term, the Bush administration may likely demand more strongly that Beijing and Taipei act according to the rules set by the United States. Such a move by the White House may be pro-active, but its purpose is to passively defend the U.S.-defined status quo in the Taiwan Strait; this is why Washington chose to use the 'consistent' principle to stop both sides of the Taiwan Strait in order to ensure that neither side would transgress outside the United States' consistent policy and thus put the region in danger.

"Judged from this perspective, the Bush administration has evidently learned from its previous experiences over the past four years in dealing with both sides of the Taiwan Strait and it will demonstrate greater confidence during its second term to maintain a dynamic balance of the cross-Strait situation. The Taiwan government, as a result, will have less room to move around like it did over the past four years if it wants to go beyond Washington's 'consistent' principle."

12. Rice Nomination

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" editorialized (11/20):

". With Rice's ascent to the top foreign policy post, what's in store for Washington's China policy? Will it bode well for Taiwan and cross-strait relations?

"Nobody knows. But one thing is certain: Washington's one China policy will not change. Washington will continue to sell arms to Taiwan, to be sure. But it would be wrong for Taiwan to assume that the neo-conservatives in the Bush administration will tolerate President Chen to keep taking dangerous moves toward independence, which would spell trouble for Washington.
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"Is Rice capable of doing the same as Henry Kissinger did for Nixon three decades ago? We hope not, but nobody can rule out the possibility. In realpolitik, all that counts is national interests, not moral principles."

PAAL